

2016

Advocating School-University Partnership for Responsive Teacher Education and Classroom-based Curricula: Evidence from Teachers' Cognitions about Principles of Curriculum Design and Their Own Roles

Muhammad Rahimi

University of Auckland, New Zealand

Lawrence Jun Zhang

University of Auckland, New Zealand, lj.zhang@auckland.ac.nz

Nasim Nasr Esfahani

Sepahan Institute of Higher Education, Iran

Recommended Citation

Rahimi, M., Zhang, L., & Esfahani, N. (2016). Advocating School-University Partnership for Responsive Teacher Education and Classroom-based Curricula: Evidence from Teachers' Cognitions about Principles of Curriculum Design and Their Own Roles.

Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 41(12).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2016v41n12.6>

Advocating School-University Partnership for Responsive Teacher Education and Classroom-based Curricula: Evidence from Teachers' Cognitions about Principles of Curriculum Design and Their Own Roles

Muhammad Rahimi

Lawrence Jun Zhang*

University of Auckland, New Zealand

Nasim Nasr Esfahani

Sepahan Institute of Higher Education, Isfahan, Iran

Abstract: This study investigated the differences between novice and experienced non-native English-speaking English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teachers' cognitions about EFL curriculum design principles and their own roles in designing an EFL curriculum. The challenges these teachers faced in their roles and the support system they needed were also explored. Data were collected from 40 non-natives English-speaking EFL teachers using a questionnaire and open-ended questions. The results show that the observed differences between the two groups' cognitions about EFL curriculum design principles were not statistically significant. Results also reveal that both groups believed they lacked the required theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and time and financial resources to develop the classroom-based EFL curriculum and assumed the role of material adapters for themselves. Teachers asserted that they tried to accommodate their students' needs, interests, and other contextual factors through teaching strategies. They expressed aspirations for ongoing support from local scholars and experienced teachers to update their theoretical knowledge and to meet the challenges arising from their teaching contexts. Implied in the teachers' responses was their need for developing a classroom-based EFL curriculum. In light of the findings, we recommend initiating school-university partnership for developing responsive teacher education programmes for pre-service as well as in-service teacher education.

Keywords: Teachers Cognition, EFL Curriculum Design, School-university Partnership

Introduction

Teachers typically adopt either a curriculum fidelity, an adaptation, or an enactment approach (Shawer, 2010). The first category of teachers embraces a fidelity approach to the curriculum by solely transmitting the content and following the materials lesson-by-lesson or page-by-page. The second category of teachers pursues an adaptation approach by making

adjustments to the curriculum, for instance, through skipping tasks, changing the sequence, or adding new activities and tasks to the prescribed curriculum. The third group of teachers adopts an enactment approach (classroom-based curriculum) by undertaking needs analysis, content and materials development, sequencing, formatting, and assessment by taking into account the particularities of their classroom and learners.

Adopting different curriculum approaches leads to different specific implications for the curriculum, teacher development, and learner achievement (Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992). Craig (2006) found a positive association between teachers' adaptation to the curriculum and their professional development. Furthermore, prior studies have also revealed positive links between teachers' adaptation approach to the curriculum and their professional satisfaction (Ben-Peretz, Mendelson, & Kron, 2003). Moreover, previous research findings drew positive relationships between curriculum adaptation and student learning and motivation (Shawer, Gilmore, & Banks-Joseph, 2008). However, research on why teachers adopt a certain approach to the curriculum is scant (Shawer, 2010). It is hypothesized that teachers adopt either a curriculum adaptation or an enactment approach due to their previous pre-service teacher training and various learning and social experiences (see Latham & Vogt, 2007). It is really helpful to understand why teachers adopt a certain approach to the curriculum and the challenges that they face; this is the aim that this study pursues. To this end, qualitative and quantitative data were collected from 40 novice and experienced Iranian teachers to explore their cognitions about EFL curriculum design principles, the approaches they adopt to the curriculum, the challenges they face, and the support they need.

Review of the Literature

Theoretical Background

The dynamic, situated, and complex nature of teaching calls for accommodating distinct features of teaching contexts (e.g., students' cultural background, students' and teachers' individual attributes, availability of resources and expertise, students' needs and interests) to achieve desirable social and learning outcomes (Kumaravadivelu, 2014; Zhang & Ben Said, 2014). For instance, due to individual learner factors, one group of learners might find a learning task very engaging and motivational, while the other group might find the same task difficult or boring. In an EFL classroom, one group of learners might speak fluently at the expense of accuracy; the reverse might be true for the other group. These two groups of learners might need different learning tasks, activities, and assessment, which require ongoing thinking, decision-making, assessment, and curriculum modification, which, in turn, require empowerment of teachers.

More importantly, our knowledge about effective learning, engagement in learning, task difficulty, task sequencing, among other aspects of learning, is evolving. In general, new developments occur in second language (L2) learning with regard to what works and why and also in the approaches to understanding what works and why. This requires an L2 curriculum to be responsive to rapid developments in technology, to new knowledge and ideas, to innovative assessment approaches, to new resources and challenges, and to learners' needs and interests, among many other factors. Such a curriculum requires continuous adjustments or reforms informed by the developments in theory as well as ongoing needs analysis and programme evaluation (Wong & Tsui, 2007; Zhang, 2004). Although there are both commonalities between, and particularities in, diverse teaching and learning contexts, prescribing one rigid and centrally-

developed curriculum to diverse contexts is not advisable. In line with the principles of culturally responsive pedagogies, developing principles or guidelines for curriculum design based on the commonalities and allowing teachers to develop their own curriculum by taking into account centrally-developed guidelines and the particularities of their teaching and learning context is more defendable. Culturally responsive pedagogies advocate that teachers should use “the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2002, p.106). However, developing a classroom-based curriculum can create challenges for schools and teachers, because developing a responsive curriculum requires theoretical and hands-on knowledge and expertise and also time and financial resources (Wong & Tsui, 2007). Imposing such a responsibility on teachers and schools and expecting desirable outcomes without provision of ongoing support seems unrealistic.

One approach to addressing this challenge is establishing school-university partnership. Such school-university partnership can inform a responsive teacher development curriculum comprising pre-service and in-service programmes to empower teachers to be able to develop a curriculum responsive to general commonalities and contextual particularities (Gao, 2015; Zhang, 2004; Zhang, Aryadoust, & Zhang, 2016). It is advisable that such a partnership be established between a local university and several local schools as knowledge of contextual particularities is essential in order to establish successful collaboration with schools to develop and subsequently make required adjustments or reform to the curriculum. The partnership should be a continuous one, as developments in knowledge and challenges in particularities of each teaching context pose different and new challenges. Developed through a school-university partnership, a classroom-based curriculum can address constant changes and developments and facilitate achieving desirable social and learning outcomes.

School-university partnership for the purpose of ongoing teacher development and classroom-based EFL curriculum design can take different forms. For instance, in the Australian context, Brady (2002) found that school principals advocated a wide range of school-university partnership initiatives, including “supervision and mentoring, collaborative teaching initiatives, shared research, professional development, joint planning, and school enrichment/support” (p. 6). To establish a successful partnership initiative in a particular teaching and learning context, it is necessary to solicit stakeholders’ views on what sorts of partnership meet their needs best, and what benefits each party will receive from the partnership.

Soliciting teachers’ views on the effectiveness of teacher education programmes in preparing them to be curriculum developers, what challenges they face in classroom-based curriculum design, and what kind of support they need can feed into establishing appropriate partnership initiatives (see e.g., Bao, Zhang & Dixon, 2016). Our study is such an attempt, which explored teachers’ cognitions about EFL curriculum design principles, their own roles in designing the EFL curriculum, the challenges they faced, and the support they needed.

EFL Curriculum Design Principles

Several sets of principles of language curriculum design exist in the literature. Johnson (1989) proposed three principles comprising coherence, permanent change and innovation, and different approaches integration. Tomlinson (2010) presented six principles for developing language materials. Ellis (2005) put forward 10 principles. Nation and Macalister (2010) proposed an elaborate list of 20 principles grouped into three categories: Content and sequencing,

format and presentation, and monitoring and assessment. We review these principles in some detail next.

The principles for content and sequencing are concerned with what items should be included in a language course and in what order these items should be presented in the course. The principle of format and presentation deals with pedagogy and methodological strategies that actually occur in the classroom; typically teachers exert more influence on curriculum adaptation through curriculum presentation. Monitoring and assessment concern with evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and students' learning. Nation and Macalister (2010) maintain that ongoing needs and environment analysis, selecting, ordering, presentation, and assessing the language course material should be undertaken continuously by taking into account the learners and their needs, the teaching conditions, and the time and resources available (see also Bao et al., 2016; Zhang, 2016). Implied in their recommendation is a classroom-based curriculum. Since Nation and Macalister (2010) proposed an elaborate set of principles, in this study, a curriculum design questionnaire based on these principles was administered to participating teachers to solicit their cognitions about these principles by examining the extent to which they agreed with them (see also Macalister, 2014).

Teachers' Cognitions

Educational research has demonstrated the influential role of teachers' underlying beliefs, principles, and assumptions in their classroom practice. The role of language teachers' cognitions, which are amalgam of "what teachers know, believe and think" about language teaching (Borg, 2003, p. 81; see also Borg, 2006, 2011; Ferris, 2014; Goh et al., 2005; Yuan & Lee, 2014), has also been widely researched. Studies have examined teachers' cognitions about various aspects of their practice, such as their decision-making, teaching of grammar, corrective feedback provision, and reading (e.g., Almarza, 1996; Atai & Fatahi-Majd, 2014; Gao & Ma, 2011; Golombok, 1998; Johnson, 1999; Richards, 2008). However, teachers' cognitions about curriculum design require further exploration. We maintain that research on teachers' cognitions about curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation, the roles they assume for themselves, the challenges they face in their role, and the type of support they need can build on previous research and provide insights into developing responsive teacher education programmes.

In light of the above discussion and due to the significance of research on teacher cognitions (Borg, 2011; Kang & Cheng, 2013; Mori, 2011; Rahimi & Zhang, 2015) as a feeder field to teacher education and the influence of teachers' cognitions on their practices (Kang & Cheng, 2013) and the roles they play in the process of curriculum development, we asked the following questions:

- 1) Are there any differences between the novice and experienced teachers' cognitions about curriculum design principles regarding the content and sequencing, format and presentation, and monitoring and assessment and about their own role in curriculum design?
- 2) What are the novice and experienced teachers' reasons for their cognitions about their roles in curriculum design?
- 3) What challenges do the novice and experienced teachers face in their assumed role?
- 4) What support systems do the novice and experienced teachers need to meet the challenges they face in their role?

Methodology

As discussed above, teachers typically have three options at their disposal: Implementing a centrally-developed curriculum, adapting it, or developing a classroom-based curriculum for state-run and private language schools. In the case of implementing and adapting a curriculum a top-down approach is typically adopted by educational policy makers in Iran, and teachers play a minor role even in choosing the course book, while in a classroom-based curriculum teachers are involved in the whole process of curriculum design. Having the expertise of designing and developing the curriculum is one of the rudimentary requirements of materializing a classroom-based curriculum. In other words, during teacher education courses, teachers need to be empowered with the required expertise to develop a classroom-based curriculum. The purpose of this study is to explore whether teachers believe they acquire such expertise during teacher education programmes by exploring novice and experienced teachers' cognitions about curriculum design.

We collected qualitative and quantitative data by administering the Teachers' Cognitions about Curriculum Design Questionnaire (TCACDQ), developed by the research team, to the teachers who attended a two-day workshop on the recent developments in language teaching; the principles of curriculum design were one of the issues addressed in this workshop. At the conclusion of the second day, the teachers were requested to complete the TCACDQ, which was accompanied by three open-ended questions on the roles the teachers assumed for themselves from among the three options (Curriculum implementer, adapter, and developer) and on their reasons for their choice, on the challenges they faced in their role, and the support systems they needed.

Participants

The participants in this study were 40 non-native English-speaking EFL teachers in private language schools and state-run schools in Iran. Their teaching experience ranged from three to eight years, and they were teaching beginner, low-intermediate, and advanced proficiency level students. Thirteen of them were male and 27 female, whose ages ranged between 25 and 35 years. All teachers had a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature, Translation and Interpreting, or English Language Teaching. The teachers had also attended pre-service teacher training courses at private language schools. The teachers with less than one year classroom teaching experience were assigned to the novice group, while teachers with more than 5 years classroom teaching experience were assigned to the experienced group. In the literature, teachers with less than two years of experience and those with more than four to five years of teaching experience are typically considered novice and experienced, respectively (e.g., Gatbonton, 2008; Rahimi & Zhang, 2015). A purposive sampling approach was adopted in selecting the participants. Teachers with different types of training were selected for the novice and the experienced groups. This was done to ensure maximum variation to represent approximately the EFL teacher population in Iran, where teachers with diverse education backgrounds teach English.

Instruments and Procedures

TCACDQ

The TCACDQ was developed by the research team based on the comprehensive list of principles of curriculum design (Nation & Macalister, 2010) to investigate teachers' cognitions about curriculum design. The TCACDQ has three sections. The first section is designed to collect participants' demographic information, including their gender, academic qualifications, and the length of EFL teaching experience. The second section includes 24 questions investigating teachers' cognitions about the content and sequencing, format and presentation, monitoring and assessment, and their roles in curriculum design. The teachers rated the items on a 5-point scale, from strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree=5. In the third section, open-ended questions were used to solicit the teachers' reasons for their conceptions of their roles in curriculum design, the challenges they faced in their roles, and the support system they needed.

Procedure

The teachers attended a two-day in-service training workshop, the purpose of which was to familiarize them with the recent development of language education. At the conclusion of the workshop, the researchers administered the TCACDQ to the teachers who participated in the study on a voluntary and anonymous basis. The completed questionnaires were collected on the same day.

Data Analysis

After ensuring that the collected data met the assumptions of the *t*-test, we performed independent samples *t*-tests to compare the differences between the novice (Nov.Ts) and experienced teachers' (Exp.Ts) responses. Further analysis of the data was also conducted to identify the percentage of teachers who rated the items "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" for their roles in curriculum design.

For the qualitative data, nine teachers did not answer open-ended questions; therefore, 31 novice and experienced teachers' responses (Novice = 17, Experienced =14) to the three open-ended questions were analysed separately. First a deductive approach (Patton, 2002) guided by the qualitative research questions was employed to identify teachers' responses to each question. Then, two of the authors coded teachers' responses utilizing iterative processes of open and axial coding (Dörnyei, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Teachers' responses to each question were read and reread and coded separately to the extent that further analysis to develop new themes was unlikely. Open coding was conducted to identify the common themes through iterative processes of reading and rereading. Through open coding, the teachers' reasons for their roles, challenges in their roles, and the support they needed were categorized into general themes. We used highlighters to mark general categories, in addition to using axial coding to establish links between general categories in order to create more encompassing themes (Dörnyei, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Tse, 2000). For instance, for teachers' reasons for adapting the teaching materials, differences in learners' pre-existing interests, capabilities, and needs subthemes were grouped under the theme of individual learner differences.

With regard to teachers' reasons for not developing a classroom-based curriculum, lack of access to new knowledge and hands-on practical experience in curriculum development

emerged as subthemes, which formed a theme named lack of theoretical and hands-on knowledge. To ensure validity, two of the authors performed coding and categorizing of the data separately; the simple percentage agreement between the two coders was high (86%). The coders resolved their remaining differences in coding through discussion. Because of anonymity of participants, member-checking was not feasible. Nevertheless, the findings of qualitative data corroborated the results of the quantitative data, which further ensured the validity of the collected data, a mixed methods design merit.

Findings

Results from TCACDQ

Content and Sequencing

The teachers were requested to respond to eight items regarding the principles of content and sequencing in curriculum design. The principles address what items should be included and the order in which these items should be presented in a language course. As Table 1 shows, the mean of the experienced teachers ($M = 34$) was lower than that of the novice teachers ($M = 35.25$), but their responses were not statistically significant: $t(38) = 1.264, p = .214$. This finding indicates that both groups favoured principles of content and sequencing in curriculum design.

Groups	N	Mean	SD	T	df	p(2-tailed)
Nov.Ts	20	35.25	3.16	1.264	38	.214
Exp.Ts	20	34	3.09			

Table 1: Comparison of Responses on the Principles of Content and Sequencing in Curriculum Design: Nov.Ts vs. Exp.Ts

Format and Presentation

The second category of questions sought teachers' cognitions about the principles of format and presentation in curriculum design that dealt with pedagogy and methodological strategies actually occurring in the classroom. As Table 2 demonstrates, the mean of the experienced teachers ($M = 45.30$) is higher than that of the novice teachers ($M = 45.25$), but again, the discrepancies between their responses are not statistically significant: $t(38) = .039, p = .969$. This finding indicates that both groups agreed with the principles of format and presentation in curriculum design.

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p(2-tailed)
Nov.Ts	20	45.25	4.29	.039	38	.969
Exp.Ts	20	45.30	3.88			

Table 2: Comparison of Responses to the Format and the Presentation in Curriculum Design: Nov.Ts vs. Exp.Ts

Monitoring and Assessment

With regard to monitoring and assessment principles in curriculum design that was used for evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and students' learning, as Table 3 displays, the mean of the experienced teachers ($M = 9.20$) is higher than that of the novice teachers ($M = 9.10$). The discrepancies between their responses are not statistically significant: $t(38) = .447, p = .657$. This finding indicates that both groups are in favour of the principles of monitoring and assessment in curriculum design.

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p(2-tailed)
Nov.Ts	20	9.10	.71	.447	38	.657
Exp.Ts	20	9.20	.69			

Table 3: Comparison of Responses to Monitoring and Assessment in Curriculum Design: Nov.Ts vs. Exp.Ts***Teachers' Roles in Curriculum Design***

The teachers' mean responses to the TCACDQ items on the teachers' roles in curriculum design are presented in Table 4. Of the three choices, "teachers should adapt" received the highest mean scores from the novice and experienced teachers ($M = 4.60$ and 4.45 , respectively). "Teachers should only implement" and "teachers should develop" received low means from both groups.

Teachers' role	Exp. Ts. Mean	SD	Nov. Ts. Mean	SD	t	df	p (2-tailed)
Implement	2.20	.95	2.20	1.23	.000	38	1.00
Adapt	4.45	.51	4.60	.50	.936	38	.35
Develop	2.65	.98	2	1.12	1.94	38	.06

Table 4: Comparison of Responses to the Teachers' Role in Curriculum Design: Nov.Ts vs. Exp.Ts

However, the differences between the novice teachers and more experienced teachers' responses to Implement, Adapt, and Develop roles were not statistically significant. This means that both groups believed that they should adapt the curriculum, not implement or develop the programme. To account for the teachers' choice of their roles, their reasons will be discussed in the following section.

As illustrated in Table 5, the majority of the experienced teachers and the novice teachers "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with their roles as the implementer or developer of the curriculum. Conversely, all of the experienced and novice teachers "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with adapting the curriculum.

Teachers' Role	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Nov.Ts	Exp. Ts	Nov.Ts	Exp. Ts	Nov.Ts	Exp. Ts	Nov.Ts	Exp. Ts	Nov.Ts	Exp. Ts
Implement	5		15	15	10	10	35	55	35	20
Adapt	60	45	40	55						
Develop	5		5	30	15	10	35	55	40	5

Table 5: Teachers' Responses on Their Role in Curriculum Design (%): Nov.Ts vs. Exp.Ts**Teachers' Responses to Open-ended Questions**

Similar themes emerged from novice and experienced teachers' responses to the open-ended questions. The findings show that: (a) Teachers disagreed with implementing the materials and supported adapting the materials using methodological strategies because of the particularities of the contextual factors and ongoing changes in their learners' lacks, necessities, and wants (Nation & Macalister, 2010); (b) Both groups mentioned their lack of required theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and time and financial resources constraints on developing a classroom-based EFL curriculum, despite their strong beliefs in the necessity of classroom-based EFL; (c) Teachers demanded ongoing support to update themselves with current and new ideas about EFL instruction (e.g., new ideas on motivating learners), and to foster their skills in theorizing from their practice and in generating local solutions.

As Teacher A, who was a teacher of eight years, commented, the teaching situations in his context required materials adaptation in order to cater to students' needs and motivate them to learn English more effectively.

Due to diversity of teaching conditions, adapting instructional materials is imperative...New approaches to teaching and motivating students are not accessible to me; Ongoing support provided in the form of monthly workshops held by the scholars and researchers in the field can materialize this. Surely, researchers are generating new knowledge and ideas. By accessing new developments, teachers may not perpetuate old approaches. For instance, giving evidence-based motivating teaching strategies as options to teachers can help teachers understand which options work best for each student; this can save time by avoiding trial and error in class...

Teacher A (Age: 29; Gender: Male; Years of experience: 8)

Teacher A's comments were echoed by other teachers of similar teaching experiences. These teachers' comments indicate that they did really want to adapt teaching material for benefiting their students, as is shown in Teacher E's candid remarks.

Teachers should adapt instructional materials depending on the class level. In some classes, you need to focus on some specific parts more... On the other hand, some activities in books are redundant and very time-consuming. After teaching for some many years, I have realized that, as teachers, we need to make many decisions spontaneously. If there were some programmes that could help us make effective planning and online decisions, they would be very valuable...

Teacher E (Age: 28; Gender: Female; Years of experience: 7)

Teachers also commented that by examining teaching conditions and students' capabilities, teachers will be better able to teach the materials more appropriately, yet they

should not go beyond the determined syllabus because it is designed based on the latest developments. This is typically represented in Teacher G's view:

Teachers have the responsibility to improve themselves. They can do it by reading about philosophy, history, not just teaching. If teachers are wise enough, they will be able to meet all the challenges. It is the internet age; they can find any kind of support they need by themselves.

Teacher G (Age: 26; Gender: Female; Years of experience: 10 months)

Discussion and Conclusion

The result of the quantitative section of the questionnaire revealed that both the novice and experienced teachers favoured the principles of curriculum design, as stated in Nation and Macalister (2010). Similar themes emerged from the analysis of the experienced and novice teachers' responses to the qualitative section of the questionnaire data. Both the experienced and the novice teachers expressed their lack of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. They also mentioned resources constraints as the main obstacles to their developing of classroom-based curricula. Particular features of teaching contexts (e.g., cultural issues, teaching and learning conditions, and time and resources constraints) and learner attributes (e.g., learners' pre-existing interests, their current and future needs, their proficiency level, their learning styles, their level of anxiety and motivation and their language learning aptitude) emerged as the main arguments against implementing the centrally-developed curriculum and for adapting the materials.

Findings from the qualitative data show that teachers faced challenges in motivating learners, managing classes, incorporating new principles into their practice, and adapting the materials to the particularity of their context and demanded systematic ongoing support to meet these challenges. They proposed that in-service teacher development support be provided in the form of workshops, conferences, seminars, further education, provision of online access to journals, and opportunities for ongoing systematic meetings with experienced teachers and researchers to seek their advice and expertise on issues arising from their practice.

In light of the findings, we would argue that, in an ideal condition, empowering teachers with theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and sufficient resources might enable them to develop classroom-based curricula. However, assigning curriculum developer roles to teachers can impose huge workload on them and financial burdens on schools. Alternatively, teachers can be empowered with methodological strategies to accommodate contextual and learner difference factors. To achieve this goal, teachers should have a strong theoretical foundation and reflective teaching capability to be able to monitor and evaluate the outcome of their methodological choices and make required adjustment to their classroom practices. They can achieve this through reflection in, on, and for, action (Farrell, 2014) provided that they are equipped with theoretical knowledge and reflective skills (such as action research, among others) to resolve their local issues. However, to meet this need, pre-service and in-service mentoring and teacher education grounded in theory and in approaches to help teachers theorize from their practice are necessary. This, in turn, leads to another challenge for teacher educators: designing effective teacher education programmes that seek to build teachers' theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and reflective practices.

Empowering teachers with methodological strategies is necessary but not sufficient, as centrally developed national curricula typically restrict teachers' methodological manoeuvres

and innovation. For instance, the content and assessment aspects of central curricula might hamper teachers' adapting new methodological approaches. In addition, due to contextual and individual particularities, the same content and pedagogy (e.g., learning materials) might engage learners from different contexts differently. A handy example is that materials designed centrally might not sufficiently accommodate all sorts of contextual diversities in subcultures, resources, strengths and weaknesses, and the affordances of each individual school operating in diverse socio-cultural and socio-economic contexts. However, classroom-based curricula and central curricula may be reconciled by acknowledging the role of the central authority in providing the general curriculum design principles and desirable learning outcomes and accepting the role of teachers in designing classroom-based curricula responsive to learners' dynamic needs and interests, rapid developments in educational science and technology, and other dynamic contextual factors.

Regardless of which option one subscribes to, ongoing programme evaluation and reform in response to dynamic needs and interests of learners and new ideas arising from theory, practice, and research are imperative, which require ongoing teacher development and curriculum reform. Expecting teachers to develop responsive classroom-based curricula without providing them with intellectual support, mentoring and required resources is obviously unrealistic. Teachers undoubtedly need ongoing support irrespective of whether they are expected to be responsive to the particularities of their context through only methodological strategies or methodological strategies and classroom-based curricula. One approach to providing such an ongoing support is establishing school-university partnership to provide teachers with pre-service and ongoing in-service support. The partnership can also inform universities in developing teacher education programmes responding to the teachers' dynamic needs, interests, particularities of their teaching contexts, and new developments in teacher education theory and practice (see also Kumaravadivelu, 2014). However, further research is warranted to seek stakeholders' voices in order to establish a school-university partnership that satisfies the needs and interests of all parties.

Evidently, our study has two limitations. First, the findings are generalizable only to similar contexts and further research might be needed with a large population pool from diverse teaching contexts to cast clearer light on the roles of experience in teachers' cognitions, challenges, and needs. Second, as teachers' participation was on a voluntary basis and anonymous, rendering member-checking impossible, future research might want to further improve the validity of coders' interpretations by verifying the data with participants. In-depth interviews may also provide thorough understanding of teachers cognitions about their roles in curriculum development, strategies they adopt to implement the curriculum (see Shawer, 2010, for such strategies), and their needs in developing a classroom-based curriculum.

References

- Almarza, G. G. (1996). Student foreign language teachers' knowledge growth. In D. Freeman & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *Teacher learning in language teaching* (pp. 50-78). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Atai, M. A., & Fatahi-Majd, M. (2014). Exploring the practices and cognitions of Iranian ELT instructors and subject teachers in teaching EAP reading comprehension. *English for Specific Purposes*, 33, 27-38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2013.07.007>
- Bao, C., Zhang, L. J., & Dixon, H. R. (2016). Teacher narratives as theorisation of teaching: A Chinese teacher's perspectives on communicative language teaching (CLT). *New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics*, 22(2), 37-52.
- Ben-Peretz, M., Mendelson, N., & Kron, F. W. (2003). How teachers in different educational contexts view their roles. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19, 277–290. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X\(02\)00100-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(02)00100-2)
- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36, 81-109. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444803001903>
- Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. London: Continuum.
- Borg, S. (2011). The impact of in-service teacher education on language teachers' beliefs. *System*, 39, 370-380. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2011.07.009>
- Brady, L. (2002). School university partnerships: What do the schools want? *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 27, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2002v27n1.1>
- Craig, C. J. (2006). Why is dissemination so difficult? The nature of teacher knowledge and the spread of curriculum reform. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43, 257–293. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312043002257>
- Deni, A. R., & Malakolunthu, S. (2013). Teacher collaborative inquiry as a professional development intervention: benefits and challenges. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 14, 559-568. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-013-9280-y>
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2005): Principles of instructed language learning. *System*, 33, 209-224. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2004.12.006>
- Farrell, T.S. (2014). Teacher you are stupid! –Cultivating a reflective disposition. *TESL-EJ*, 18(3).
- Ferris, D. R. (2014). Responding to student writing: Teachers' philosophies and practices. *Assessing Writing*, 19, 6-23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2013.09.004>
- Gao, X. (2015). Promoting experiential learning in pre-service teacher education. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 41, 435-438. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2015.1080424>
- Gao, X., & Ma, Q. (2011). Vocabulary learning and teaching beliefs of pre-service and in service teachers in Hong Kong and mainland China. *Language Awareness*, 20, 327-342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2011.579977>
- Gatbonton, E. (2008). Looking beyond teachers' classroom behaviour: Novice and experienced ESL teachers' pedagogical knowledge. *Language Teaching Research*, 12, 161-182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168807086286>

- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53, 106-116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053002003>
- Goh, C. C. M., Zhang, L. J., Koh, G. H., & Ng, C. H. (2005). *Knowledge, beliefs and syllabus implementation: A study of English language teachers in Singapore*. Singapore: National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University.
- Golombok, P. R. (1998). A study of language teachers' personal practical knowledge. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32, 447-464. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588117>
- Johnson, R. K. (1989): *The Second language curriculum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524520>
- Johnson, K. E. (1999). *Understanding language teaching: Reasoning in action*. Boston, MA:Heinle & Heinle.
- Kang, Y., & Cheng, X. (2013). Teacher learning in the workplace: A study of the relationship between a novice EFL teacher's classroom practices and cognition development. *Language Teaching Research*, 18, 1-18.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2014). Afterword: Rethinking global perspectives and local initiatives in language teaching. In S. Ben Said & L. J. Zhang (Eds.), *Language teachers and teaching: Global perspectives, local initiatives* (pp. 317-323). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Latham, N. I., & Vogt, W. P. (2007). Do professional development schools reduce teacher attrition? Evidence from a longitudinal study of 1,000 graduates. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58, 153-167. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487106297840>
- Macalister, J. (2014). Desire and desirability: Perceptions of needs in a transnational language teacher education programme. In S. Ben Said & L. J. Zhang (Eds.) *Language teachers and teaching: Global perspectives, local initiatives* (pp. 303-316). New York: Routledge.
- Mori, R. (2011). Teacher cognition in corrective feedback in Japan. *System*, 39, 451-467. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2011.10.014>
- Nation, I.S.P., & Macalister, J. (2010). *Language curriculum design*. New York: Routledge.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rahimi, M., & Zhang, L. J. (2015). Exploring non-native English-speaking teachers' cognitions about corrective feedback in teaching English oral communication. *System*, 55, 111-122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2015.09.006>
- Richards, J. C. (2008). Second language teacher education today. *RELC Journal*, 39, 158-177. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688208092182>
- Shawer, S., Gilmore, D., & Banks-Joseph, S. (2008). Student cognitive and affective development in the context of classroom-level curriculum development. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 8, 1-28.
- Shawer, S. F. (2010). Classroom-level curriculum development: EFL teachers as curriculum-developers, curriculum-makers and curriculum-transmitters. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 173-184. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2009.03.015>
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Snyder, J., Bolin, F., & Zumwalt, K. (1992). Curriculum implementation. In P.W. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum* (pp. 402-435). New York: Macmillan.
- Tomlinson, B. (2010): Principles of effective materials development. In N. Harwood (Ed.), *English language teaching materials* (pp. 81-108). New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Tse, L. (2000). Student perceptions of foreign language study: A qualitative analysis of foreign language autobiographies. *Modern Language Journal*, 84, 69-84.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/0026-7902.00053>
- Wong, J. L. N., & Tsui, A. B. M. (2007). How do teachers view the effects of school-based in-service learning activities?: A case study in China. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 33, 457–470.
- Yuan, R., & Lee, I. (2014). Pre-service teachers' changing beliefs in the teaching practicum: Three cases in an EFL context. *System*, 44, 1-12.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2014.02.002>
- Zhang, L. J. (2004). Reforming a teacher education programme for PRC EFL teachers in Singapore: Sociocultural considerations and curriculum evolution. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 13, 223-252.
- Zhang, L. J. (2016). Reflections on pedagogical imports of Western practices for professionalizing second-language writing and writing-teacher education. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 39(3), 203-232.
- Zhang, L. J., Aryadoust, V., & Zhang, D. (2016). Taking stock of the effects of strategies-based instruction on writing in Chinese and English in Singapore primary schools. In R. E. Silver & W. Bokhorst-Heng (Eds.), *Quadrilingual education in Singapore: Pedagogical innovation in language education* (pp. 103-126). Singapore: Springer.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-967-7_7
- Zhang, L. J., & Ben Said, S. (2014). Toward a global understanding of local initiatives in language teaching and teacher education: Global rules, local roles. In S. Ben Said&L. J. Zhang (Eds.) *Language teachers and teaching: Global perspectives, local initiatives* (pp. xviii-xxx). New York: Routledge.